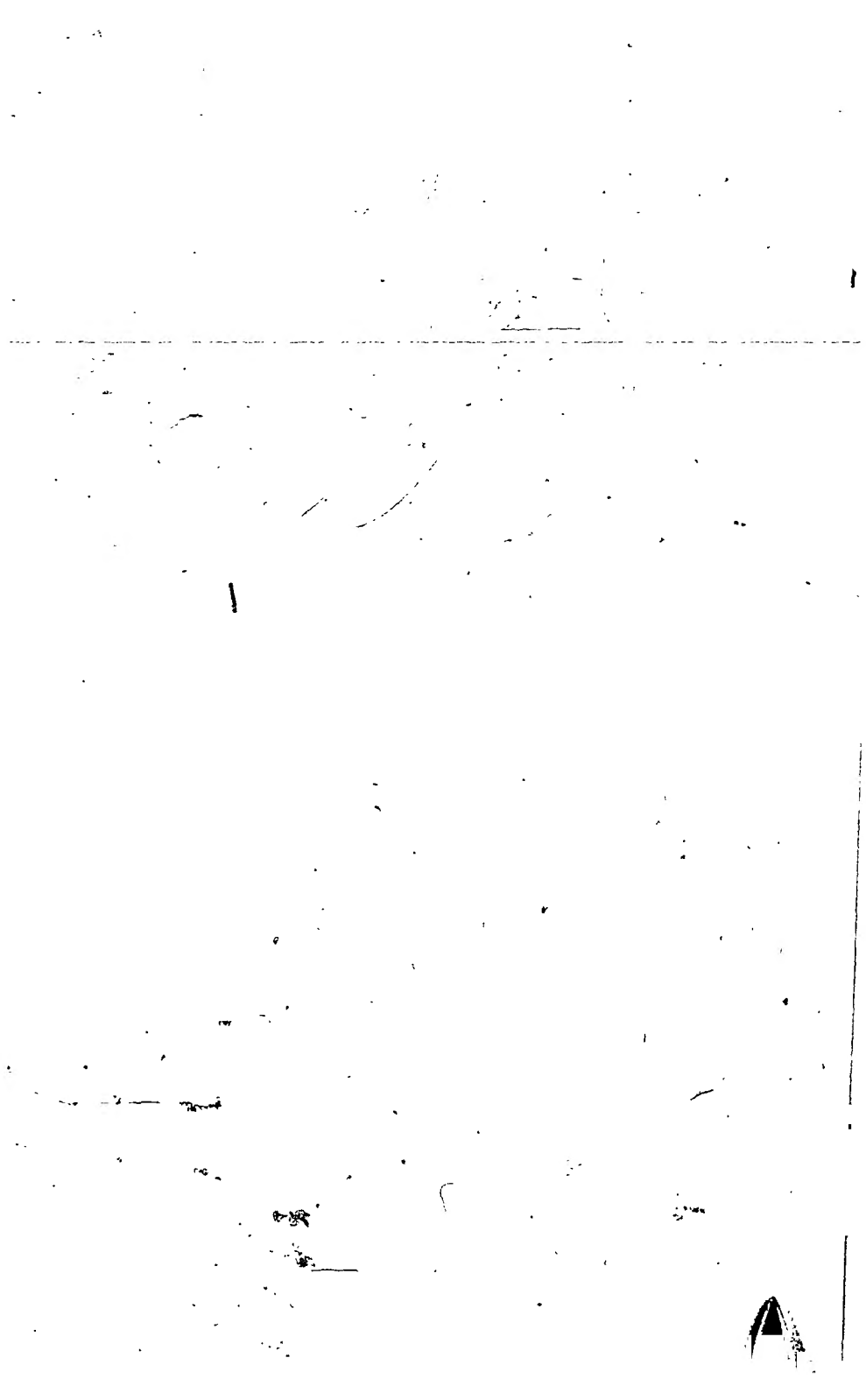


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A
LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL GREY,

ON THE SUBJECTS OF

TRANSPORTATION

AND

EMIGRATION,

AS CONNECTED WITH

AN IMPERIAL RAILWAY COMMUNICATION

BETWEEN

THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC.

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INTRODUCTION.

“The consummation of our Colonial Empire is necessary for our domestic peace.”*

OUR most gracious Sovereign the Queen having been pleased to grant her Royal Authority that a work, now in the course of publication, “to make the condition and worth of the colonies more generally understood and more fully appreciated,”† should be dedicated to Her Majesty, I venture again to call the serious attention of my countrymen to the vast importance of an IMPERIAL RAILWAY COMMUNICATION between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans; not merely as regards the ultimate consequences of the work itself, but as it will afford the means of establishing distinct, yet regular and permanent systems of emigration and transportation.

We were told last year that we had “a superabundance of capital, a plethora of talent, scientific and commercial,” that only wanted “an outlet to be beneficially employed;” ‡ and this year we learn that “manufactures, commerce, shipping, money and credit are increasing, we are evidently approaching

* Edinburgh Review, January, 1850.

† Montgomery Martin's new work on the Colonies.

‡ Morning Herald, 1849; Times, 1850.

“ a period, when the nation, like a promising youth,
 “ conscious of new faculties and strength, will natu-
 “ rally look about for some fresh employment of its
 “ accumulated means.”

Humbly do I conceive that Providence has re-
 tained for our use, and pointed out to us the field,
 whereon the generous and enlightened sons of
 England may work out the noble destiny that
 awaits them, and become as far-famed and vic-
 torious in the productive works of peace, as they
 ever have been in the destructive splendour of war.

Let but the people of the British Empire will it;—
 and in a few years, when the Royal Standard shall
 be hoisted at Halifax, and the royal salute fired in
 honour of her Majesty's Natal Day—then shall be
 heard the continuous roar of British artillery, and
 the inspiring sound of British cheers, from ocean to
 ocean,—from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and the
 wire of the electric telegraph will point to the
 astounding news,—that the morning gun, which in
 Nova Scotia announced the approach of a day so
 welcome to all English hearts, had been responded
 to at sunset, from the rock of Alexander Mackenzie,
 in New Caledonia. Who then will talk of an-
 nexation, and what enemy will approach the
 frontier with hostile intentions, when the first gun
 fired would be answered by an instantaneous peal
 of British artillery across the Continent of North
 America?

“ Our day dream,” says one of the standard

periodicals just published,* "is six hours from
 "London to Holyhead,—then an iron screw
 "steamer, double the size of the *Great Britain*,
 "‘ruling the waves straight,’ and bidding sea
 "sickness avaunt,—two hours to Kingston,—then
 "four hours to Galway, the leaping off place for
 "the West,—then in another giant steamer six days
 "to New York,”—to *Halifax is surely meant, and*
in six days more, through the British North Ame-
rican Provinces, to the Coast of the Pacific.
 "What say ye, educators of the people, rulers
 "of the state?—‘Where there’s a will there’s a
 "‘way’ is an old English proverb; and gladly do
 "we pay tribute of respect to one who holds the
 "foremost place in the work of mercy—of civi-
 "lizing the world, by the removal of physical ob-
 "stacles to personal communing between nations.
 "Robert Stevenson may be regarded as the type
 "and pattern of the onward moving English race,
 "practical, scientific, energetic, and in the hour of
 "trial heroic.”

England^a has capital, has surplus population,
 convict labour, and the requisite engineering enter-
 prize and talent. "Even if it were desirable, it is
 "not possible that she can remain stationary, she
 "must either advance or recede in her great-
 "ness.”† And let me ask, what is to prevent her
 forward movement? She has a man "with a

• Westminster Review.

† Blackwood’s Magazine.

“ clear brain and sound digestion, a man whose
 “ breakfast was never disturbed by the apprehen-
 “ sions of physical difficulties in engineering.”

“ Ride on,” says the Psalmist, “ and thy right hand
 “ shall teach thee.” Is it for nothing “ that to

“ England has been committed the sway of an
 “ empire on which the sun never sets, at that pre-
 “ cise period at which scientific discoveries have
 “ won their latest triumphs over space and time?”

“ In England, the largest experience is now
 “ united with the largest powers and the largest
 “ empire.” Let us away then to fell the forests of

British North America, to people its prairies, to
 cross the Rocky Mountains to the far West, to
 establish our mercantile navy at Nootka Sound, and

“ thus diffuse over a new created world the laws of
 “ Alfred, the language of Shakspeare, and then
 “ Christian Religion—the last great heritage of
 “ man.”

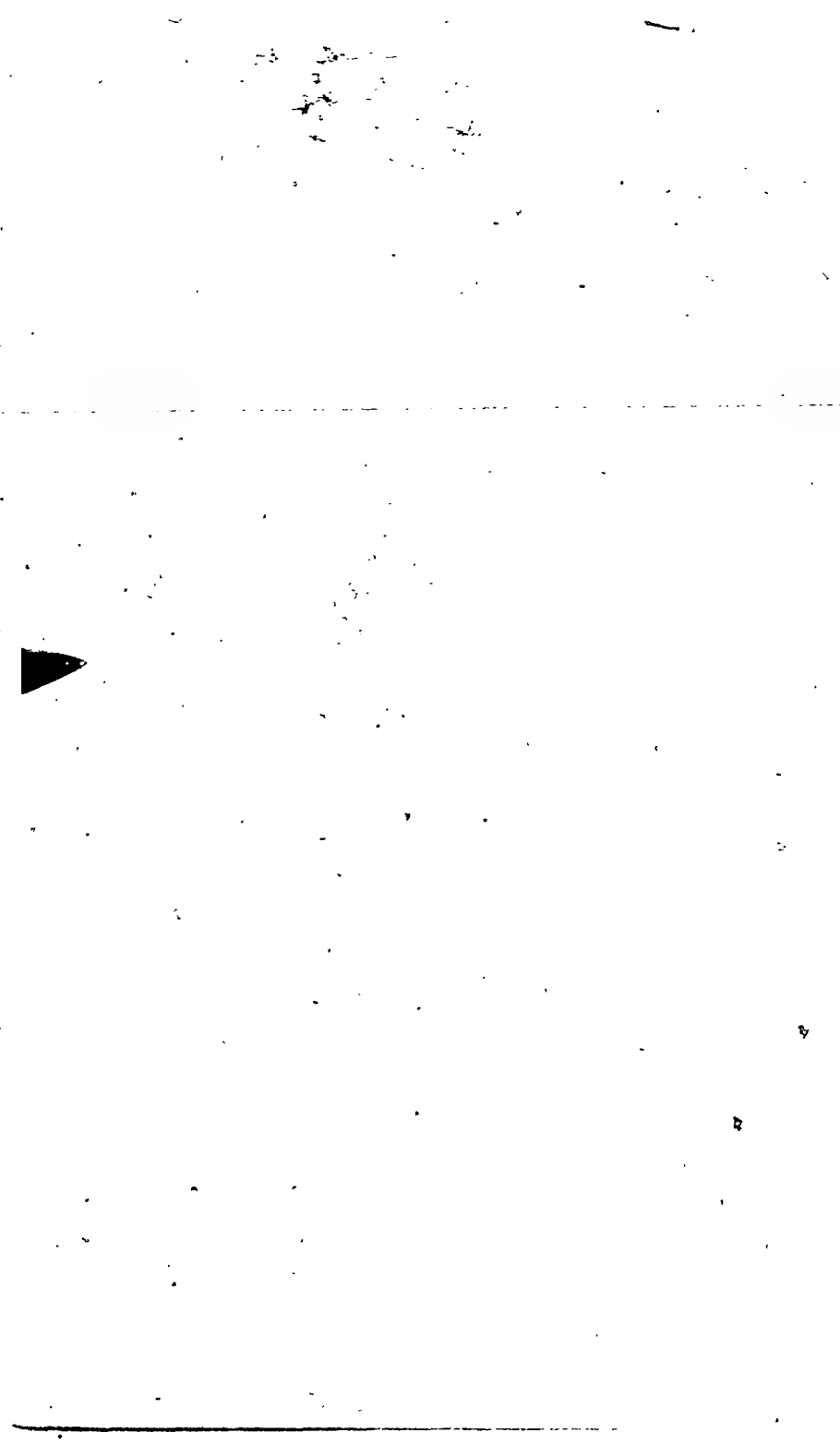
“ Immer immer nach West!”

"South of Vancouver's Island, till you come to San Francisco, there is not a single available spot where a ship can take shelter. Under these circumstances I must say it is no answer to tell us of the distance of Vancouver's Island from Great Britain. The efforts which are now making for the colonization of neighbouring districts, make it certain that some means of overland communication will, before long, be discovered."—*Lord Lincoln*, 1849.

"Whether it be possible to establish regular and rapid communication, *vid* Canada, with the Coast of the Pacific, remains yet to be ascertained."—*The British Colonies*, 1849. By R. Montgomery Martin, Esq.

"There need be no hesitation in affirming that colonization, in the present state of the world, is the very best affair of business in which the capital of an old and wealthy country can possibly engage."—*MILL* *Principles of Political Economy*.

"Yet all this time we are left wholly in the dark as to what the State ought to do with its offenders. . . . At the present moment there really is no positive and practicable plan before the Nation. It is true every now and then philanthropic and ingenious projectors come before the public, and offer, at the trifling outlay of a Quarter of a Million, to convert, year by year, two hundred young pickpockets into respectable men. We cannot afford such expensive experiments. We cannot afford to spend £50 a year upon a convict at home."—*The Times*, 1849.



“ Let those, who discard speculations like these as wild and improbable,
“ recur to the state of public opinion at no very remote period on the subject of
“ Steam Navigation.

“ Within the memory of persons not yet past the meridian of life the impos-
“ sibility of traversing by Steam Engine the channels and seas that surround
“ and intersect these islands was regarded as the dream of enthusiasts.” *

TO

THE RIGHT HONORABLE EARL GREY,

Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.

MY LORD,

WHEN we reflect upon the very great interest that now attaches to all the much-talked of routes between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, and the various discussions that are daily taking place as to the relative merits or advantages of each foreign line proposed, whether for Ship Canal or Railway,—it is not surely unnatural to conclude that any tolerable arguments in favour of an Imperial or British Colonial Communication across the continent of North America will also be listened to with attention, and be equally with those for other routes “ weighed in the balance.”

In the early part of last year, my Lord, an attempt was made, by the publication of a pamphlet, to call more particular attention to this subject, and later in the year, owing to the advice of friends as well as to the indulgence and encouragement given to the Author's first attempt,

* Dr. Lardner.

a revised edition of that Pamphlet was brought out, a copy of which I have now the honour to forward to your Lordship.

Independent however, my Lord, of this great commercial and political question of the age, the Trans-American Ship Canal or Railway, by means of which the people of the United States hope "to revolutionize the commerce of the world," there are numerous other highly important questions now before the British public, two of which your Lordship is well aware stand prominently forward as of vital consequence to this empire—EMIGRATION and TRANSPORTATION.* As regards the first, my Lord, we have long since been told that "the duty of Government is first "to regulate the stream, . . . so that if a man be determined on leaving the United Kingdom, he may settle "in one of its colonies;" and as regards the second, we have only a few days ago been asked "How are we to "deal with the poor wretches whose youth, whose poverty, "whose ill education, whose manifold misfortunes, whose "still sacred souls plead for our care? Ten thousand flip-pant negatives will not meet the question—we want a "positive answer!" That positive answer, my Lord, may, I think, be given, should Her Majesty's Ministers determine to employ convicts in certain localities, to prepare the way for an Imperial Railroad Communication from Halifax through the Canadas and some part of the Rocky Mountains to the shores of the Pacific, and in clearing the land on each side of such a route for the purposes of settlement.

But before, my Lord, proceeding to take into consideration the various details necessary to establish a proper system for the employment of convicts on such a work, it will be well to look at the practicability of the work itself, and to such other means as we have at hand for the accomplishment of an undertaking apparently so gigantic. And I am emboldened therefore to hope that your Lordship will excuse the step I am now

* See Edinburgh Review, July, 1847, January, 1850.

taking of intruding on time so valuable, and that before I proceed further, your Lordship will even permit me to explain that in the publication of the pamphlet, I have now the honour to forward, I was impelled by no personal motive, influenced by no feelings of ambition, and had no speculation to promote. But, my Lord, I had long observed the struggles made by the people of the United States to force their way across the continent of America, and to obtain the command of the Pacific, either for commercial or political purposes, and early had I understood their difficulties. It was therefore, my Lord, with anxiety that I watched the final arrangements for the settlement of the North West Boundary Question, feeling certain that upon it depended, not merely that of the Annexation of the Canadas to the United States, but the even more important one of an imperial communication, safe and rapid, with the shores of the Pacific. But not until very lately did I contemplate taking any active measures to bring these ideas before the serious consideration of my countrymen; peculiar circumstances alone, unnecessary here to mention, have led me forward in this difficult path—and I am well aware, my Lord, how very deficient is the accompanying Pamphlet of all those details so important to make it valuable as an argument in favour of, or as inducement to urge forward, any great commercial undertaking. But if your Lordship should be satisfied that it contains sufficient reasoning matter to show the importance, and, in a general way, the practicability of the great National Work proposed, and should your Lordship be pleased to consider that the prosperity and glory of this mighty empire may be thereby augmented, I shall at all events have the satisfaction of knowing that I have neither thought nor written in vain; for I should then rest satisfied, my Lord, that all the necessary detail and requisite information would soon appear at your Lordship's bidding; and proud indeed ought to be the feeling of all those who might be called upon to afford their mite of labour or of

knowledge towards the accomplishment of so great a National Work, which, if commenced after prudent consideration, but with fixed determination to carry out, the present generation might see completed; and those who are now astonished at the apparent magnitude of the project, would then smile at the simplicity of the undertaking, and would wonder why they ever doubted its possibility.

It has been objected, by some, my Lord, that the proposed route from Halifax to the Pacific would stretch across the broadest part of the Continent of North America; but, my Lord, those who would argue against its adoption on this account have not sufficiently reflected upon the subject, or it would have occurred to them that the wonderful power of steam, that agent which the Almighty has allowed to be so fully developed by man, enables us to travel three or four times quicker by land than by sea; but even should we allow for our calculation only a little more than half as quick, and consider the average passage from Liverpool to Halifax as ten days, the 3000 miles across the Continent of British America would easily be traversed over in five; the Sandwich Islands would be reached in about ten days more. "The value of these Islands to the commerce of the North Pacific is incalculable; they form indeed a hotel and a storehouse for the refreshment and supply of vessels, situated in the most convenient position immediately on the highway between Asia and America." A few years' labour then, my Lord, and propotional judicious outlay of capital, would enable the merchants of Great Britain and of Europe to communicate in less than a month with one of the most important points in the Pacific, to say nothing of the direct communication to Japan and China, and the whole route be under the Imperial Government of Great Britain. Neither ought it to be forgotten, my Lord, by those who would argue against crossing the broadest part of the Continent, that almost every acre of that land might give a home to

the houseless wanderer, and daily bread to the starving man; and since the cultivation of land is, after all, the only real source of wealth, an ultimate profitable return must ensue to the Capitalists who might be induced to come forward and assist in the formation of Settlements, and in the construction of a Line of Railway across the North American Continent through British Dominions. I trust, then, my Lord, that your Lordship will be of opinion, that the time has arrived, when the policy and vast scheme suggested by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, (whose other ideas have all been carried out) "of opening an intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and forming regular establishments through the interior and both extremes," may be fully carried out; and that before long both the travellers and the mails from Europe may be enabled to pass with ease and safety through the wide territories of our North American Colonial Empire. And then, indeed, my Lord, "I am a Man of the North," will be no vain nor idle boast, but may be the watchword of a powerful nation, and become the emblazoned motto on a Royal Standard—"the Crest of the World" being carried and occupied; may not the ideal Paradise "the Happy Hunting Grounds" of the eastern tribes of the prairies "of the Mountains of the Setting Sun," become in reality the cultivated places occupied (as the Indians imagine them to be) by "towns of free and generous spirits;" and why may we not hope to see those very Indians themselves become a civilized portion of those societies and members of the Church of Christ. The beautiful country between the Saskatakewan River and the tributaries of the Missouri is thus described by an American author:—"All the region along the base of the Rocky Mountains is agreeably diversified by gentle hills and fertile plains. It is watered by innumerable small Streams and Lakes, all kinds of Animals abound. This region extends 100 miles to the eastward, and is the favourite abode of the Blackfoot Indians."

It will now be necessary, my Lord, to take a general glance at the several routes proposed, so as to enable me to bring forward the arguments I mean to use in favour of the British Colonial Communication in such manner as to render them apparent even to those who have not as yet had their attention called to this subject.

The routes to be considered may then be divided under three heads :—

I. CENTRAL AMERICA.

1. Across the Isthmus of Panama,—Railway or Ship Canal.
2. By Nicaragua,—Ship Canal.
3. By Tehuantepec,—a Ship Canal or Railway.

II. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

4. From New Orleans across Texas.
5. From St. Louis by way of Gila,—Port San Diego.
6. From some point on the Missouri, by the Platte or Kansas, through the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains.
7. From Lake Michigan, or some point on the Mississippi, across the Rocky Mountains to the Head Waters of Puget's Sound.

III. BRITISH AMERICA.

8. Imperial or British Colonial Communication from Halifax to Frazer's River and Nootka Sound.

Commodore Wilkes, of the United States-Navy, has said,—“ I am in favour of all routes, but my examinations of the country have satisfied me that some of them are impracticable,—obstacles being interposed by nature, which even the energies of a great nation cannot overcome.”*

* The physical and engineering difficulties of the Central American Routes are well shown by the sections given in a map just published by J. Wyld, of Charing Cross.

" The routes over the Isthmus of Panama and Tehuan-
 " tepec," says Commodore Wilkes, " have occupied the
 " attention of Europe for a long period of years, and nu-
 " merous examinations and surveys have been made.
 " * * * It is but recently that these schemes have
 " been revived with any prospect of success, and this has
 " grown out of the necessity which is felt to exist through-
 " out the whole country of having an easy and rapid com-
 " munication with our distant territories. As a temporary
 " measure for communicating with the coast of South
 " America and our own possessions, its construction is to
 " be desired, and this is all it can achieve; it can go no
 " farther, commercially speaking, with reference to the
 " countries more remote; such additional expenses would
 " be incurred as entirely to overcome the benefits arising
 " from a gain of time." Speaking of the routes already
 alluded to, namely, those of Central America, Commodore
 Wilkes further states,—“There is another view of great
 “force in a political light. The whole of the capital for
 “construction will be drawn out of our own country, and
 “we will be building up, by making these expenditures,
 “commercial depôts to rival our own cities, and remove
 “the channels of trade from us altogether, to the prejudice
 “of our own country and its citizens. For ten years it
 “may be advisable to use one of these routes, or until
 “such time as the routes through our own territory can
 “be completed and in operation; but it can never satisfy
 “the wants of the nation, or preserve those advantages
 “we should look forward to obtain.”

All these extracts, my Lord, it is true, merely record the
 opinions of an individual, but they are the opinions of a
 talented and scientific naval officer, who is for all routes,
 and are therefore entitled to full weight. But as the three
 routes of Central America may be ultimately all Ship
 Canals, and the question of the transshipment of goods
 thereby excluded in the consideration of these communi-
 cations, it will be unnecessary to dwell longer upon them,

further than to point out the opinion given by Commodore Wilkes, as regards the climate and prevailing winds. "The route across the Pacific from Panama offers many difficulties to sailing vessels in the prevailing winds, calms, &c. Panama is indeed one of the worst ports on the Western Coast to arrive at or depart from. The seasons there are divided into the fine and the rainy; the former, or what is called summer, though in North latitude, is from December to May, and only during this period is it advisable to approach this coast. In the rainy or winter season, from June to November, every part of it is liable to hard gales, tornadoes or heavy squalls, succeeded by calms and deluges of rain, and the most dangerous lightning. Sickness begins at Panama as early as March, and continues until December; and, with the exception of the fine season, the whole coast in its vicinity may be described as dangerous, and on every account to be avoided. From December to May, the prevailing winds are from the North and North-west, the remainder of the year they blow from the North-east, South-east, and the West; but are at all times uncertain, and calms frequently prevail; vessels may be detained on their passage, from these causes, so long as to make this route of greater length than that now followed by the China trade."

From all then, my Lord, that can be gleaned from the opinions of Commodore Wilkes, we may fairly come to the conclusion that if these routes will not satisfy the wants of America, much less are they likely to satisfy the wants of the British Empire; and if they are to be looked upon by the Americans as mere temporary expedients, they never can be calculated upon by Great Britain as permanent routes to Asia.

The next routes to be considered, my Lord, are those of the United States, all of which must, of course, be by Railway, and require therefore a transshipment of goods, to be made use of by British merchants. Upon these

routes Commodore Wilkes observes : " The recognizance of
 " the country through which the Southern route by Rail-
 " way, across the country by way of the Gila, would pass,
 " has been fully made known to us by Colonel Emory,
 " and his Report shows that it would be nearly impossible
 " for this purpose. The altitude of the mountains is in
 " itself sufficient to decide the question ; but if we grant
 " that this can be overcome, the sterile country through
 " which it would run brings conviction to the mind, that,
 " if it is not impossible, it is certainly unadvisable. It can
 " never become an inhabited country ; therefore one great
 " object in the construction of a Railroad would be lost.
 " Again, if this last fact were not the case, the proposed
 " terminus on the Pacific, at the port of San Diego, would
 " never accommodate the trade, and half or two-thirds of
 " the ships would not be able to enter. The port is inade-
 " quate for the commerce that such an intercourse would
 " bring about ; and the country around can never furnish
 " the necessary supplies. The proposition for terminating
 " it at San Francisco is equally objectionable, and amounts
 " to an impossibility, on account of the high mountain
 " ranges which surround it.

" Whether this road is to start from St. Louis or Texas
 " is immaterial. The same route, by the Gila is to be
 " followed, and, of course, the same objections exist in
 " both.

" From the thirty-third to the forty-second parallel there
 " is no route by which the mountains can be avoided, and
 " the great arid plains would also present insuperable ob-
 " stacles. There are three ranges of high mountains
 " traversing from north to south three parallels : the Ana-
 " huac, Wahsatch and Californian, all equally impassable ;
 " and the last, in particular, shuts out all communication
 " with the ' El Dorado ' and its port."

Commodore Wilkes then says : " The route from the
 " Missouri by the Platte or Kansas, through the south
 " pass, is too sectional, and would pass through a country

“ throughout nearly its whole extent uninhabitable. It
 “ would be below the head-waters of all the rivers, where
 “ there could be no bridging of the rivers, and the public
 “ lands could not suffice to build the road, neither would
 “ any portion of them be at all benefited by it; and the
 “ whole northern section of our country be deprived of
 “ any advantages to result from its construction, which
 “ would be almost equally the case with our South Atlantic
 “ States.”

And here, my Lord, even at the risk of being tedious, I cannot refrain a quotation from that universally admired author, when, in his *Astoria*, he speaks of Mr. Hunt's expedition from St. Louis across the Mountains to the mouth of the Columbia (a distance in a direct line of about 1800 miles):—“ A part of their route lay across an immense tract, stretching north and south for hundreds of miles along the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and drained by the tributary streams of the Missouri and the Mississippi. This region, which resembles one of the immeasurable steppes of Asia, has not inaptly been termed ‘the great American Desert.’ It spreads forth its undulating and treeless plains and desolate sandy wastes, wearisome to the eye from their extent and monotony, and which are supposed by geologists to have formed the ancient floor of the ocean, countless ages since, when its primeval waves beat against the granite basis of the Rocky Mountains.

“ It is a land where no man permanently abides; for, in certain seasons of the year, there is no food either for the hunter or his steed. The herbage is parched and withered; the brooks and streams are dried up; the buffalo, the elk and deer have wandered to distant parts, keeping within the verge of expiring verdure, and leaving behind them a vast uninhabited solitude, seamed by ravines, the beds of former torrents, but now serving only to tantalize and increase the thirst of the traveller.”

The Rocky Mountains being crossed, “ a dreary sandy

“ desert of sand and gravel extends from Snake River almost to the Columbia. Here and there is a thin and scanty herbage, insufficient for the pasturage of horse or buffalo. Indeed these treeless wastes between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific are even more desolate and barren than the naked upper prairies on the Atlantic side; they present vast desert tracts that must ever defy cultivation, and interpose dreary and thirsty wilds between the habitations of man, in traversing which the wanderer will often be in danger of perishing.”

Such, my Lord, are the difficulties that, according to the Americans themselves, they have to encounter in any attempt to cross the Continent of America until they come as far north as Lake Michigan. It must be very evident, my Lord, to any one taking the trouble to look at the map of North America, that the Americans cannot possibly have any direct Railway route north of the most southern point of Lake Michigan. The lake itself would of course interfere with any such undertaking. In speaking of this last or most Northern Route, Commodore Wilkes observes, “ Nature here invites the enterprize. The distance is the shortest; it has few, if any, difficulties to overcome; the lands it would pass through are some of the best in the western country; and the greater part of the whole distance can become densely populated, and opens out an entirely new country.”

The whole of these observations, my Lord, regarding this Northern American route, are equally applicable to the proposed British Colonial route, in support of which assertion I beg to refer your Lordship to Sir George Simpson's Overland Journey round the World. The extracts from which, although they would be highly interesting, would be too long for the present occasion. I cannot refrain however from reminding your Lordship, that Sir George Simpson states that the country from Fort Garry is practicable for wheels as far as Fort Edmonton—about 600 miles—and that the vicinity of the latter Fort “ is

“rich in mineral productions. A seam of coal, about ten feet in depth, can be traced for a very considerable distance along both sides of the river. This coal resembles slate in appearance; and though it requires a stronger draught of air than that of an ordinary chimney, yet it is found to answer tolerably well for the blacksmith’s forge.”

Commodore Wilkes observes, “the general government would be equally benefited by the increased value it would give to all public lands on each side of this route,” this would equally or more strongly apply, according to the plan on which it is proposed to carry out the Colonial Route.

Again, Commodore Wilkes observes, “the terminus on Lake Michigan would enable the large supplies required for the persons employed, as well as the materials, to be forwarded with great economy as well as facility of transportation, and secure the necessary timber for the construction of the road. The country for the first eight hundred miles is admirably adapted for the purpose, offering no impediments whatever; and after this distance, such a route will offer as to place the whole country on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains subservient to its use and support,—a portion of the country, from the accounts of those who have visited it, surpassed by none in fruitfulness or climate.” All these remarks, my Lord, apply equally to the British Colonial Route proposed, with the addition of the water facilities for the transport of material, &c., &c., being much more in favor of the British than the American Route, as can be seen by a very slight inspection of the map.

To continue the extracts from Commodore Wilkes: “the question,” he says, “seems simply to be, can the cost of the work be defrayed by the sale of the lands? Many well informed and prudent persons believe that it can, and numerous men of capital and enterprize are willing to embark in the undertaking.

" Some seem to doubt the practicability of transporting
 " merchandize across a railroad at sufficiently low rates to
 " make them cheap to the consumer; but that this can be
 " done at the present rate of toll is, I think, entirely
 " settled by the experience we have had in this country on
 " many of our roads; and it is admitted that the minimum
 " cost of transportation is not yet reached: there can be
 " little doubt therefore that a road which seeks alone to be
 " reimbursed for management and repairs, and whose tolls
 " will be under the control of the nation, will be able to
 " transport as cheap, if not cheaper, than any which is
 " expected to pay a dividend. The speed of transportation
 " of passengers and freight is now well ascertained; the
 " transit of both can no longer be considered doubtful; it
 " must result in economy and ease, so much so that the
 " journey to the shores of the pacific will be made both
 " for business and pleasure."

All the arguments, my Lord, that Commodore Wilkes
 has brought forward in favour of Mr. Whitney's or the
 North American route are equally applicable in favour of
 the British Colonial proposed Line, and for a temporary
 purpose the latter has much greater advantages in water
 communication.

Lieutenant Henry Millington Synge has shown how a
 water communication for large vessels may be opened by
 means of the Ottawa, the Lakes, and other waters, as far as
 Lake Winnipeg, and at no very great expense. If then,
 my Lord, simultaneously with the commencement of the
 Railroad between Halifax and Quebec, a great national
 route was also commenced near Fort Garry through the
 Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, and the works proposed
 by Lieutenant Synge put in progress, the British empire
 might look forward with confidence to see completed before
 long, the first, and what I have no doubt will ultimately
 be, the best route from Europe to Asia across the Continent
 of America.

The whole of Commodore Wilkes's arguments have gone.

to prove that the northern route is not only practicable, but will be a profitable one. Now, my Lord, if that is to be the case, where all the labour would be paid labour, and no surplus population to provide for, how much more ought the Colonial route to be a profitable one, if the roughest and most unpleasant part of the labour is to be accomplished by men who must be fed, who must be clothed; who must be housed, guarded and cared for somewhere? It is no new suggestion to send convicts a little beyond the verge of civilization and to employ them in clearing lands and constructing roads; and we have been distinctly told, that "generally the State has a right to the service of her convicts. England has ample territory in which to exercise that right. There are works in her Colonies no individual has money enough, and no company interest enough to undertake." And we have been asked, my Lord, "Can we not classify our convicts? To this is the whole question of transportation reducible."

And thus, my Lord, I come to the consideration of the employment of the convicts, not because I would at all acknowledge that the undertaking cannot be accomplished without them, but, my Lord, because I consider that a certain class of them may be most usefully and beneficially employed at a saving of expense to the country, and at an advantage to themselves.

When we consider, my Lord, how many honest, able-bodied men there are in Great Britain, unable to obtain employment, and who must either have recourse to public or private charity, or make up their minds to quit their native land; and when we reflect how largely that number will be presently increased by the reduction of the army, —when thousands of men who have faithfully served their queen and country will be thrown upon their own resources,—it is distressing to think how numerous are the convicts now retained at home, who, well clothed, well housed, well fed, are performing the work in our dock yards at Portland, at Spike Island and elsewhere, which

could be equally well, if not better, done by our unemployed, who are thus deprived of their daily bread. It is worse than idle, my Lord, it is mockery, for men to talk of and praise the forbearance of the people, their quiet and orderly, conservative conduct under great privations, difficulties and sufferings, and yet allow such a state of things to continue. Let the remedy be what it may, my Lord, such a system cannot, ought not to last—indeed the increase of the convicts would render it impossible; but, my Lord, it need not last, for we have an immense track of territory to which convicts could be sent, and usefully employed, without asking the leave of a single colonist.

The press of Great Britain has so repeatedly and so very lately pointed out the very great difficulty, as well as the immense importance, attached to the solution of the convict question, which has even been spoken of “as one, on the timely and satisfactory adjustment of which probably depends the destiny of England,” that I am well aware, my Lord, how presumptuous it may appear in me to state, that we have our remedy close at hand.

It has been observed, that “the subject of abolishing the penalty of transportation was one of very great importance;”—now, my Lord, the suggestions I am about to make are principally founded upon the idea that “the penalty of transportation” cannot be abolished.

1st. Because I believe it to be almost the unanimous opinion of the judges of the land—that the penal code would not be complete unless the power of transportation should be retained.

2nd., Because the abolition of that punishment would entail an enormous increase of expenditure in the construction of prisons, already unfortunately too numerous, although no doubt necessary to carry into effect the penalties awarded for minor offences.

3rd. Because it would be highly unjust towards the honest, industrious labourer to employ a convict on any work (no matter whether of *absolute* necessity

or not) which could be performed in England by men who had committed no crime, but who were often without bread from forced idleness.

- 4th. Because no other punishment could be substituted that would carry with it such beneficial results as a properly conducted system of transportation.

Considering transportation thus as absolutely necessary in the present state of society, and so long as the roots of crime—want of education and want of employment—remain; and viewing the present objections in some of our colonies to receive our convicts, as fatal to the plans already projected, I wish to remind your Lordship that England has a large extent of country in which she could adopt and carry out as a permanent measure, any system of penal arrangements her legislators might think proper to determine upon, and where, when the period of penal labour expired, there would be no difficulty to answer the question, "What is to be done with these men;" for there would be no society to turn them loose upon, yet plenty of work for them to perform and rewards to be enjoyed, and there would be no necessity to retain a single convict in England even for solitary confinement.

The country in which I consider these views could be carried into effect, is the Hudson's Bay Territory, including New Caledonia.

It must of course be well known to your Lordship that "for nearly two hundred years England, through the instrumentality of an effectually-organized association, has not only maintained a position in North America, but extended her power;" and that the Hudson's Bay Company "is indeed a powerful body, or rather a great power in America,"—that "its ports may be found occupying all the most important points in those regions," and that "its boats may be met in every stream, conveying British manufactures to the interior."

Should this Honourable Company then, my Lord, be willing to receive convicts into their territories, and which

I have understood is not improbable, this national route might be commenced under very favourable circumstances; for several miles of land might be immediately cleared for the reception of settlers. I should propose that in the first instance only about 500 convicts, selected on purpose for this work, should be sent out; that they should be organized as much as possible on the system of a regiment, intelligent and active sergeants and corporals being selected on purpose to accompany them; that reward should be held out to these convicts in the shape of settlement at the different posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, or such other localities as it may think proper to select. I should further propose that these convicts should be accompanied by clergymen, who would also be useful in the education and in the conversion of the Indians. From this nucleus and during the next year, a permanent system might be established, and proper posts selected for the reception of a larger number. The sheds or barracks built for the convicts, and for the troops to guard them, might be sold for the benefit of Government to settlers as the convicts should move forward on the line of route. sw

A variety of other considerations would become necessary, and the plan extended by degrees, so as to meet most of the difficulties now felt in England by the pressure of her convict weight; and none of these would be lost sight of, I feel confident, should Government look upon the suggestion as worthy of consideration.

Before concluding this letter, I must attempt to detain your Lordship a moment longer, because I wish to be clearly understood regarding the appointment of Commissioners as necessary towards the carrying into operation the works of the proposed Imperial Communication. My anxiety on this subject arises from several questions that have been put to me by friends and others who have taken an interest in this subject.

My views, then, my Lord, on this head may be thus

understood :—It is proposed to look upon our Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the Canadas, the Territory of the Hudson's Bay Company and New Caledonia (exclusively English, the Hudson's Bay Company having only a tenant right therein,) as representing five distinct powers. Political opinions are afloat that these parts of North America may be soon consolidated into one Kingdom. Already we have been told by one of our legislators that he contemplates "an extension of our dominion across the Continent, and the formation of new States immediately north of Lake Superior;" and the statesmen of British North America have been called upon "to feel themselves the rivals of those of Washington, and able to meet them on equal terms." And then we are told that "in Nova Scotia, in Lower Canada, in Upper Canada, in the new States that might immediately arise on their long frontier line, and also beyond the Rocky Mountains, north of the River Columbia, we should soon see them with expanded views and daring conceptions the really formidable opponents of that encroaching Republic which is destined to usurp dominion over the whole Continent, unless checked and circumscribed by a spirit as bold and free as her own." How soon all this may be brought about I presume neither to judge of nor to give an opinion upon; but it does appear to me, my Lord, that the time has arrived when an unity of purpose in British North America may be at once obtained for the purpose of undertaking an Imperial Trans-American Communication. It is proposed therefore, my Lord, that in this Commission should be vested the complete sovereignty of the soil from Halifax to Fort Langley; that is to say, of a belt of land of any breadth that may be obtained from the first-named port of from one to twenty miles, or even more, across the Continent, varying according to the locality, the value of the land or the importance of the situation. (Your Lord-

• Roebuck on the Colonies.

ship is already aware that Canada has offered to give up ten miles on each side of a Railway Communication.) This Commission should be empowered to make all the necessary arrangements with the several five powers named, and whose individual interests would be looked after by each having nominated three Members. That this Commission should be further authorized to have this belt of land surveyed (not only topographically, but also geologically and in all its physical characteristics), and its limits marked out, and the whole estimated at its present value; so that each power might be ultimately enriched to the extent, at least, of what they are now willing to give up.

This Commission should also be empowered to sell, give or grant, on such terms or leases as may appear to them desirable, any portions of land along the line of communication. All the best spots or localities for towns, for agricultural settlements, for mining, &c., should be marked out, and their respective qualifications noted; so that, along this line, every county, every town, and every village of the United Kingdom might have a spot allotted to them, and to a certain extent without any purchase, beyond these realms which they could call their own; and to which spots might be forwarded, by public means, by private exertions, or by voluntary emigration, all those who wished to leave their native country for British North America, thinking to better their condition by finding a wider field for their exertions and their abilities, and who never could look forward to be landowners of any importance in the United Kingdom; one condition being attached to the tenure of land, namely, that of a portion of their labour, if required, on the great public route.

This Commission should also be authorized to borrow money upon the security of the land under the guarantee of the five powers. It should also be authorized to issue notes that might circulate along the line, and have the other powers of a bank. In short, my Lord, with the sovereignty of the land, they should be invested with the

powers of a Government, so far as might be necessary for the purpose of settling the land and constructing the road—their territory to consist of a belt of land of about 3000 miles in length; and as the greatest part of this is yet unoccupied, its breadth might be from twenty to thirty miles throughout nearly the whole stretch of the land.

This Royal or Imperial Commission should be resident in England, to be in constant communication with the Colonial Minister, and with such public bodies or private individuals as might wish to occupy land, or to assist in the construction of the road, by the formation of Companies or otherwise; and they should be represented by Sub-Commissioners at the several seats of Government of the five powers, and have also a Migratory Committee to visit the various parts of the line, and each power should appoint an Inspector to examine into the accounts and proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, and report every six months to their respective Governments and to the Colonial Minister of the Empire; and the Commissioners to hold their places during the pleasure of the Crown. The President of this Commission to be appointed by the Colonial Minister.

What may be the political convulsions of the present or future day of North America, it is of course impossible to foretell. May we not hope, that, like ourselves, her people may be saved from much that now appears to threaten them; but surely, my Lord, let the North American Provinces be British, and which, I am bold enough to say, they will remain; or let them be American, or formed into a mighty Kingdom for themselves, not the most revolutionary or illiberal set of men that could ever be brought together would attempt to interfere with the rights of such a great commercial communication—with the interests of which every man along this line of road would feel himself bound up and ready to protect. In short, my Lord, it would be the property of North America and its people,

and not of a Company, and England would be entitled to her share from being represented by New Caledonia.

The sketch or the outline however, my Lord, may be mine or anybody's—there is, perhaps, no great difficulty in imagining a splendid picture; but to colour it in the present instance, so as to make it worthy of public exhibition or public patronage, the head and the hand of the Colonial Minister are requisite; but to make it a masterpiece and the admiration of the world, allow me to say, my Lord, that the heart of the Minister must also be evident in the Work. Surely, my Lord, the people of this highly favoured country could not employ either their wealth or surplus population more beneficially or more happily than in the national work proposed; and although a loan to Russia has met with many an opponent, not one, I think, would arise to object to a loan to our own colonies, for the benefit of our own poor, to the advantage of our own commerce, and to the relief of our local taxes. In the hope that your Lordship will excuse my publicly addressing you without asking permission,

I have the honour to remain,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble Servant,

ROBERT CARMICHAEL-SMYTH.

Junior United Service Club,

23rd January, 1850.